

REFORM OR REVOLUTION

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by
**DANIEL
DE LEON**

INDUSTRIAL UNION PARTY
NEW YORK





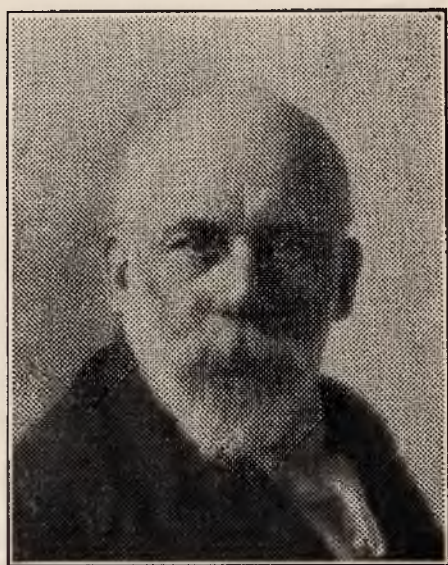
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REFORM
OR
REVOLUTION

By DANIEL DE LEON

*An address delivered under the auspices of
the People's Union, at Well's Memorial
Hall, Boston, January 26, 1896.*

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DANIEL DE LEON

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Introduction

When feudalism gave way to capitalism, the present social system, the new ruling class, the capitalist class, proclaimed a new era in history, one in which insecurity, poverty, and other social ills were magically to dissolve. "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity", the cry of the French bourgeois was the European echo of the forerunning American proclamation of the rights of "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness". Both declarations reflected not only the yearnings of the rising capitalist class for the establishment of social and political conditions under which its hampered trade and manufacturing enterprises could expand and prosper, but they also reflected the sincere belief, in many quarters, that along with the emancipation of the capitalist class from feudal restrictions would come the emancipation of all society.

This proved not to be so. The basic cause of the ills afflicting society, private property, remained untouched by the social revolutions which overthrew feudal domination, with the consequence that as soon as capitalism became established the contradictions arising out of the private ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange, created social ills as agonizing and destructive as those of feudalism. The insecurity, poverty, exploitation, and misery of the serf became the compulsory heritage of the industrial worker, and prevail today in forms and degrees made more acute by the perfection of the machine.

Disconcerted by the presence of unwelcome phenomena which they had believed would be eradicated by the advent of capitalism, many among the bourgeoisie, in their ignorance of the forces motivating and set in motion by society, sought to bring about such changes as they fancied would correct the existing evils. They failed to understand that not only were these ineradicable but they must, with the later maturity of capitalism become worse, and with the coming of its old age as a social system reach a point of excruciating intolerability for the mass of the people. That they could not perceive these developments is not surprising, for Karl Marx had not yet appeared with his scientific contributions by which these changes could be foreseen and by which it was made plain that, at least in the present period in the development of capitalism, reforms are not only impossible of achievement by the class which alone suffers under the tyranny of private property—the working class—but that where reforms are initiated they tend to perpetuate the capitalist system at a time when it has spent itself as a force for good, and exists only as an impediment to the establishment of a new and better social order.

Neither the unmistakable lesson of the futility of reform implicit in countless episodes of other periods of social disintegration and collapse, similar to that now being experienced by capitalism, nor the inescapable conclusion to be drawn from social science, that the working class must direct itself toward the abolition of the wages system instead of tinkering

ing with its effects, has diminished the number or the ardor of those who would lead the workers up the blind alley of reform. Closing their minds to history they persist in holding alluring pictures before the workers, describing the benefits which would supposedly accrue from cheaper transportation, municipal ownership, unemployment insurance, and other kindred and fatuous reforms.

If the reformers are active, the revolutionists are none the less so. The revolutionary movement is carrying on unceasing propaganda against the efforts of those who would divert the working class from the highway to revolution into the marshes of reform. It is waging incessant warfare against the pernicious reform doctrines advanced by conservative, liberal, and pseudo-revolutionary groups, and is constantly re-directing the attention of the workers toward their mission of bringing about a complete change in their social status through social revolution. In this war on error and chicanery, the revolutionary movement is guided by the profound and illuminating works of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, and Daniel De Leon. It is however no disparagement of the great contributions of Marx and Engels, to state that, so far as the campaign against reform is concerned, De Leon has supplied it with its most specific and deadly ammunition.

Next to De Leon's momentous contribution of the principles and tactics of revolutionary Industrial Unionism stands his work on reform. It was De Leon who, first of all scientists, studied, analyzed, and exposed the poisonous nature of reform movements and reformers. A conspicuous example of the thoroughness and brilliance of his results in this field is his famous address, "Reform or Revolution", here reprinted.

Although "Reform or Revolution" was delivered nearly forty years ago it is even more timely today, because of the impending doom of the capitalist system, than when first uttered. When social systems approach their last days, elements deriving, or expecting to derive benefits from their continuance resort to stimulants—reforms—as a means of energizing and prolonging their duration, much in the same manner that restoratives or stimulants are administered to dying humans. Plainly, the devices employed may retard, but cannot prevent the inevitable end. Nevertheless it is at just such times that innumerable nostrums are brought to the fore, and when, in the case of society, they act only to prevent the birth of a more advanced social order, they constitute a danger of the first magnitude. No better example has been afforded by history than the present application of the National Industrial Recovery Act in the United States—a gigantic effort by the capitalist class to revive the system by means of reforms. Absorption of the interest of the working class in such attempts, instead of being centered upon organization for revolution can lead to the gravest consequences, the rise of Industrial Feudalism, under which the working class would suffer depths of misery and degradation never before experienced. In view of this dire possibility, the importance of the work of De Leon and of the revolutionary movement should be apparent, and De Leon's speech on this question should be given the widest distribution possible.

February 3, 1934.

Executive Committee
INDUSTRIAL UNION PARTY

Reform or Revolution

By DANIEL DE LEON

Mr. Chairman and Workingmen of Boston: I have got into the habit of putting two and two together, and drawing my conclusions. When I was invited to come to Boston, the invitation reached me at about the same time with an official information that a re-organization of the party was contemplated in the city of Boston. I put the two together and I drew the conclusion that part of the purpose of the invitation was for me to come here to tell you upon what lines we in New York organized, and upon what lines we "wicked" Socialists of New York and Brooklyn gave the capitalist class last November the 16,000-vote black eye.

ORGANIZATION

It has become an axiom that, to accomplish results, organization is requisite. Nevertheless, there is "organization" and "organization." That this is so, appears clearly from the fact that the pure and simplers have been going about saying to the workers: "Organize! Organize!" and after they have been saying that, and have been "organizing" and "organizing" for the past thirty or forty years, we find that they are virtually where they started, if not worse off; that their "organization" partakes of the nature of the lizard, whose tail destroys what his foreparts build up.

I think the best thing I can do to aid you in organizing is to give you the principles upon which the Socialist sections of New York and Brooklyn are organized. To do that I shall go back to basic principles, and in explaining to you the difference there is between Reform and Revolution, I shall be able, step by step, to point out how it is we do it, and how you ought to do.

I shall assume—it is a wise course for a speaker to

adopt—that none in this audience knows what is “Reform” and what is “Revolution.” Those who are posted will understand me all the better; those who are not will follow me all the easier.

We hear people talk about the “Reform Forces,” about “Evolution” and about “Revolution” in ways that are highly mixed. Let us clear up our terms. Reform means a change of externals; Revolution—peaceful or bloody, the peacefulness or the bloodiness of it cuts no figure whatever in the essence of the question—means a change from within.

REFORM

Take for instance, a poodle. You can reform him in a lot of ways. You can shave his whole body and leave a tassel at the tip of his tail; you may bore a hole through each ear, and tie a blue bow on one and a red bow on the other; you may put a brass collar around his neck with your initials on, and a trim little blanket on his back; yet, throughout, a poodle he was and a poodle he remains. Each of these changes probably wrought a corresponding change in the poodle's life. When shorn of all his hair except a tassel at the tail's tip he was owned by a wag who probably cared only for the fun he could get out of his pet; when he appears gaily decked in bows, probably his young mistress' attachment is of tenderer sort; when later we see him in the fancier's outfit, the treatment he receives and the uses he is put to may be yet again and probably are, different. Each of these transformations or stages may mark a veritable epoch in the poodle's existence. And yet, essentially, a poodle he was, a poodle he is, and a poodle he will remain. That is Reform.

REVOLUTION

But when we look back myriads of years, or project ourselves into far-future physical cataclysms, and trace the development of animal life from the invertebrate to the vertebrate, from the lizard to the bird, from the quadruped and mammal till we come to the prototype of the poodle, and finally reach the poodle himself, and so for-

ward—then do we find radical changes at each step, changes from within that alter the very essence of his being, and that put, or will put, upon him each time a stamp that alters the very system of his existence. That is Revolution.

So with society. Whenever a change leaves the internal mechanism untouched, we have **Reform**; whenever the internal mechanism is changed, we have **Revolution**.

Of course, no internal change is possible without external manifestations. The internal changes denoted by the revolution or evolution of the lizard into the eagle go accompanied with external marks. So with society. And therein lies one of the pitfalls into which dilettanteism or "Reforms" invariably tumble. They have noticed that externals change with internals; and they rest satisfied with mere external changes, without looking behind the curtain. But of this more presently.

We Socialists are not Reformers; we are Revolutionists. We Socialists do not propose to change forms. We care nothing for forms. We want a change of the inside of the mechanism of society, let the form take care of itself. We see in England a crowned monarch; we see in Germany a sceptered emperor; we see in this country an uncrowned president, and we fail to see the essential difference between Germany, England or America. That being the case, we are skeptics as to forms. We are like grown children, in the sense that we like to look at the inside of things and find out what is there.

One more preliminary explanation. Socialism is lauded by some as an angelic movement, by others it is decried as a devilish scheme. Hence you find the Gomperses blowing hot and cold on the subject; and Harry Lloyd, with whose capers, to your sorrow, you are more familiar than I, pronouncing himself a Socialist in one place, and in another running Socialism down. Socialism is neither an aspirations of angels, nor a plot of devils. Socialism moves with its feet firmly planted in the ground, and its head not lost in the clouds; it takes Science by the hand, asks her to lead, and goes whithersoever she points. It does not take Science by the hand, saying: "I shall follow you to the

end of the road if it please me." No! It takes her by the hand and says: "Whithersoever thou ledest, thither am I bound to go." The Socialists, consequently, move as intelligent men; we do not mutiny because, instead of having wings, we have arms, and cannot fly as we would wish.

What, then, with an eye single upon the differences between **Reform** and **Revolution**, does Socialism mean? To point out that, I shall take up two or three of what I may style the principal nerve centres of the movement.

GOVERNMENT—THE STATE

One of these principal nerve centres is the question of "Government" or the question of the "State." How many of you have not seen upon the shelves of our libraries books that treat upon the "History of the State"; upon the "Limitations of the State"; upon "What the State Should Do, and What It Should Not Do"; upon the "Legitimate Functions of the State," and so on into infinity? Nevertheless, there is not one among all of these, the products, as they all are, of the vulgar and superficial character of capitalist thought, that fathoms the question, or actually defines the "State." Not until we reach the great works of the American Morgan, of Marx and Engels, and of other Socialist philosophers, is the matter handled with that scientific lucidity that proceeds from facts, leads to sound conclusions, and breaks the way to practical work. Not until you know and understand the history of the "State" and of "Government" will you understand one of the cardinal principles upon which Socialist Organization rests, and will you be in a condition to organize successfully.

We are told that "Government" has always been as it is to-day, and always will be. This is the first fundamental error of what Karl Marx justly calls capitalistic vulgarity of thought.

When man started on his career, after having got beyond the state of the savage, he realized that co-operation was a necessity to him. He understood that together with others he could face his enemies in a better way than

alone; he could hunt, fish, fight more successfully. Following the instructions of the great writer Morgan—the only great and original American writer upon this question—we look to the Indian communities, the Indian settlements, as a type of the social system that our ancestors, all of them, without exception, went through at some time.

The Indian lived in the community condition. The Indian lived under a system of common property. As Franklin described it, in a sketch of the history and alleged sacredness of private property, there was no such thing as private property among the Indians. They co-operated, worked together, and they had a Central Directing Authority among them. In the Indian communities we find that Central Directing Authority consisting of the "Sachems." It makes no difference how that Central Directing Authority was elected; there it was. But note this: its function was to direct the co-operative or collective efforts of the communities, and, in so doing, it shared actively in the productive work of the communities. Without its work, the work of the communities would not have been done.

When, in the further development of society, the tools of production grew and developed—grew and developed beyond the point reached by the Indian; when the art of smelting iron ore was discovered; when thereby that leading social cataclysm, wrapped in the mists of ages, yet discernible, took place that rent former communal society in twain along the line of sex, the males being able, the females unable, to wield the tool of production—then society was cast into a new mold; the former community, with its democratic equality of rights and duties, vanishes, and a new social system turns up, divided into two sections, the one able, the other unable, to work at production. The line that separated these two sections, being at first the line of sex, could, in the very nature of things, not yet be sharp or deep. Yet, notwithstanding, in the very shaping of these two sections—one able, the other unable, to feed itself—we have the first premonition of the classes, of class distinctions, of the division of society into


the independent and the dependent, into master and slaves, ruler and ruled.

Simultaneously, with this revolution, we find the first changes in the nature of the Central Directing Authority, of that body whose original function was to share in, by directing, production. Just as soon as economic equality is destroyed, and the economic classes crop up in society, the functions of the Central Directing Authority gradually begin to change, until finally, when, after a long range of years, moving slowly at first, and then with the present hurricane velocity under capitalism proper, the tool has developed further, and further, and still further, and has reached its present fabulous perfection and magnitude; when, through its private ownership the tool has wrought a revolution within a revolution by dividing society, no longer along the line of sex, but strictly along the line of ownership or non-ownership of the land on and the tool with which to work; when the privately owned, mammoth tool of to-day has reduced more than fifty-two per cent. of our population to the state of being utterly unable to feed without first selling themselves into wage slavery, while it, at the same time, saps the ground from under about thirty-nine per cent. of our people, the middle class, whose puny tools, small capital, render them certain victims of competition with the large capitalists, and makes them desperate; when the economic law that asserts itself under the system of private ownership of the tool has concentrated these private owners into about eight per cent. of the nation's inhabitants, has thereby enabled this small capitalist class to live without toil, and to compel the majority, the class of the proletariat, to toil without living; when, finally, it has come to the pass in which our country now finds itself, that, as was stated in Congress, ninety-four per cent. of the taxes are spent in "protecting property"—the property of the trivially small capitalist class—and not in protecting life; when, in short, the privately owned tool has wrought this work, and the classes—the idle rich and the working poor—are in full bloom—then the Central Directing Authority of old stands trans-

formed; its pristine functions of aiding in, by directing, production have been supplanted by the functions of holding down the dependent, the slave, the ruled, i.e., the working class. Then, and not before, lo, the State, the modern State, the capitalist State! Then, lo, the Government, the modern Government, the capitalist Government—equipped mainly, if not solely, with the means of suppression, of oppression, of tyranny!

In sight of these manifestations of the modern State, the Anarchist—the rose-water and the dirty-water variety alike—shouts: “Away with all central directing authority; see what it does; it can only do mischief; it always did mischief!” But Socialism is not Anarchy. Socialism does not, like the chicken in the fable, just out of the shell, start with the knowledge of that day. Socialism rejects the premises and the conclusions of Anarchy upon the State and upon Government. What Socialism says is: “Away with the economic system that alters the beneficent functions of the Central Directing Authority from an aid to production into a means of oppression.” And it proceeds to show that, when the instruments of production shall be owned, no longer by the minority, but shall be restored to the Commonwealth; that when, as a result of this, no longer the minority or any portion of the people shall be in poverty, and classes, class distinctions and class rule shall, as they necessarily must, have vanished, that then the Central Directing Authority will lose all its repressive functions, and is bound to reassume the functions it had in the old communities of our ancestors, become again a necessary aid, and assist in production.

The Socialist, in the brilliant simile of Karl Marx, sees that a lone fiddler in his room needs no director; he can rap himself to order, with his fiddle to his shoulder, and start his dancing tune, and stop whenever he likes. But just as soon as you have an orchestra, you must also have an orchestra director—a central directing authority. If you don't you may have a Salvation Army pow-wow, you may have a Louisiana negro breakdown; you may have an



orthodox Jewish synagogue, where every man sings in whatever key he likes, but you won't have harmony—impossible.

It needs this central directing authority of the orchestra master to rap all the players to order at a given moment; to point out when they shall begin; when to have these play louder, when to have those play softer; when to put in this instrument, when to silence that; to regulate the time of all and preserve the accord. The orchestra director is not an oppressor, nor is his baton an insignia of tyranny; he is not there to bully anybody; he is as necessary or important as any or all of the members of the orchestra.

Our system of production is in the nature of an orchestra. No one man, no one town, no one State, can be said any longer to be independent of the other; the whole people of the United States, every individual therein, is dependent and interdependent upon all the others. The nature of the machinery of production; the subdivision of labor, which aids co-operation, and which co-operation fosters, and which is necessary to the plentifulness of production that civilization requires, compel a harmonious working together of all departments of labor, and thence compel the establishment of a Central Directing Authority, of an Orchestral Director, so to speak, of the orchestra of the Co-operative Commonwealth.

Such is the State or Government that the Socialist revolution carries in its womb. To-day, production is left to Anarchy, and only Tyranny, the twin sister of Anarchy, is organized.

Socialism, accordingly, implies organization; organization implies directing authority; and the one and the other are strict reflections of the revolutions undergone by the tool of production. Reform, on the other hand, skims the surface, and with "Referendums" and similar devices limits itself to external tinkering.

MATERIALISM—MORALITY

The second nerve centre of Socialism that will serve to

illustrate the difference between reform and revolution is its materialistic groundwork.

Take, for instance, the history of slavery. All of our ancestors—this may shock some of you, but it is a fact all the same—all of our ancestors were cannibals at one time. The human race, in its necessity to seek for food, often found it easier to make a raid and take from others the food they had gathered. In those olden, olden days of the barbarism of our ancestors, when they conquered a people and took away its property, they had no further use for the conquered; they killed them, spitted them over a good fire, roasted and ate them up. It was a simple and the only profitable way known of disposing of prisoners of war. They did with their captives very much what bees do yet; when they have raided and conquered a hive they ruthlessly kill every single denizen of the captured hive.

Our ancestors continued cannibals until their social system had developed sufficiently to enable them to keep their prisoners under control. From that moment they found it more profitable to keep their prisoners of war alive, and turn them into slaves to work for them, than it was to kill them off and eat them up. With that stage of material development, cannibalism was dropped. From the higher material plane on which our ancestors then stood, their moral vision enlarged and they presently realized that it was immoral to eat up a human being.

Cannibalism disappears to make room for chattel slavery. And what do we see? Watch the process of "moral development" in this country—the classic ground in many ways to study history in, for the reason that the whole development of mankind can be seen here, portrayed in a few years, so to speak. You know how, to-day, the Northern people put on airs of morality on the score of having "abolished chattel slavery," the "traffic in human flesh," "gone down South and fought, and bled, to free the Negro," etc., etc. Yet we know that just as soon as manufacturing was introduced in the North, the North found that it was too expensive to own the Negro and take care of him; that it was much cheaper not to own

the worker; and, consequently, that they "religiously," "humanely" and "morally" sold their slaves to the South, while they transformed the white people of the North, who had no means of production in their own hands into wage slaves, and mercilessly ground them down. In the North, chattel slavery disappeared just as soon as the development of machinery rendered the institution unprofitable. The immorality of chattel slavery became clear to the North just as soon as, standing upon that higher plane that its higher material development raised it to, it acquired a better vision. The benighted South, on the contrary, that had no machinery, remained with eyes shut, and she stuck to slavery till the slave was knocked out of her fists.

Guided by the light of this and many similar lessons of history, Socialism builds upon the principle that the "moral sentiment," as illustrated by the fate of the slave, is not the cause, but a powerful aid to revolutions. The moral sentiment is to a movement as important as the sails are to a ship. Nevertheless, important though sails are, unless a ship is well laden, unless she is soundly, properly and scientifically constructed, the more sails you pile on and spread out, the surer she is to capsize. So with the organizations that are to carry out a revolution. Unless your Socialist organizations are as sound as a bell; unless they are as intolerant as science; unless they will plant themselves squarely on the principle that two and two make four, and under no circumstances allow that they make five, the more feeling you put into them, the surer they are to capsize and go down. On the contrary, load your revolutionary ship with the proper lading of science; hold her strictly to the load-star; try no monkeyshines and no dillyings and dallyings with anything that is not strictly scientific, or with any man who does not stand on our uncompromisingly scientific platform, do that, and then unfurl freely the sails of morality; then the more your sails, the better off your ship; but not unless you do that, will you be safe, or can you prevail.

Socialism knows that revolutionary upheavals and trans-

formations proceed from the rock-bed of material needs. With a full appreciation of and veneration for moral impulses that are balanced with scientific knowledge, it eschews, looks with just suspicion upon and gives a wide berth to balloon morality, or be it those malarial fevers that reformers love to dignify with the name of "moral feelings."

THE CLASS STRUGGLE

A third nerve centre of Socialism by which to distinguish reform from revolution is its manly, aggressive posture.

The laws that rule sociology run upon lines parallel with and are the exact counterparts of those that natural science has established in biology.

In the first place, the central figure in biology is the species, not the individual specimen. Consequently, that is the central figure on the field of sociology that corresponds to and represents the species on the field of biology. In sociology, the economic classes take the place of the species in biology.

In the second place, struggle, and not piping peace; assimilation by the ruthless process of the expulsion of all elements that are not fit for assimilation, and not external coalition—such are the laws of growth in biology, and such are and needs must be the laws of growth in sociology.

Hence, Socialism recognizes in modern society the existence of a struggle of classes, and the line that divides the combatants to be the economic line that separates the interests of the property-holding capitalist class from the interests of the propertiless class of the proletariat. As a final result of this, Socialism, with the Nazarene, spurns as futile, if not wicked, the method of cajolery and seduction, or the crying of "Peace, peace, where there is no peace," and cuts a clean swath, while reform is eternally entangled in its course of charming, luring, decoying.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Let me now give you a few specific illustrations—based upon this general sketch—that may help to point out more clearly the sharp differences there are between **Reform** and **Revolution**, and the grave danger there lurks behind confounding the two.

You remember I referred to the fact that internal, i.e., revolutionary changes, are always accompanied with external changes of some sort, and that therein lay a pitfall into which reform invariably tumbled, inasmuch as reform habitually rests satisfied with externals, allows itself to be deceived with appearances. For instance:

The Socialist revolution demands, among other things, the public ownership* of all the means of transportation. But, in itself, the question of ownership affects only external forms: The Post Office is the common property of the people,** and yet the real workers in that department are mere wage slaves. In the mouth of the Socialist, of the revolutionist, the internal fact, the cardinal truth, that for which alone we fight, and which alone is entitled to all we can give to it—that is the abolition of the system of wage slavery under which the proletariat is working. Now, up step the Populists***—the dupers, not the duped among them—with a plan to nationalize the railroads. The standpoint from which they proceed is that of middle class interests as against the interests of the upper capital-

* At the time De Leon used the term "public ownership" it was the one commonly used to denote the objective of the revolutionary movement. Since then the aim of the movement has been clarified, mainly through the work of De Leon, with the consequence that the old term has been replaced by a new one which accurately describes the Socialist goal, "social ownership".

** Clarification of Socialist theory by De Leon later threw into discard the conception of the Post Office as the common property of the people. The Post Office is the property of the political state which, in turn, is the "executive committee of the capitalist class".

*** The "Populists" were the reformers engaging general attention at the time of De Leon's address.

ists or monopolists. The railroad monopolists are now fleecing the middle class; these want to turn the table upon their exploiters; they want to abolish them, wipe them out, and appropriate unto themselves the fleecings of the working class which the railroad monopolists now monopolize. With this reactionary class interest in mind the duper—Populist—steps forward and holds this plausible language:

"We, too, want the nationalization of the roads; we are going your way; join us!"

The reform straws are regularly taken in by this seeming truth; they are carried off their feet; and they are drawn heels over head into the vortex of capitalist conflicts. Not so the revolutionist. His answer follows sharp and clear:

"Excuse me! Guess you do want to nationalize the railroads, but only as a reform; we want nationalization* as a revolution. You do not propose, while we are fixedly determined, to relieve the railroad workers of the yoke of wage slavery under which they now grunt and sweat. By your scheme of nationalization, you do not propose, on the contrary, you oppose all relief to the workers, and you have set dogs at the heels of our propagandists in Chautauqua County, N. Y., whenever it was proposed to reduce the hours of work of the employees."

While we, the revolutionists, seek the emancipation of the working class, and the abolition of all exploitation, duper-Populism seeks to rivet the chains of wage slavery more firmly upon the proletariat. There is no exploiter like the middle class exploiter. Carnegie may fleece his workers—he has 20,000 of them—of only fifty cents a day and yet net, from sunrise to sunset, \$10,000 profits; the banker with plenty of money to lend can thrive with a trifling shaving of each individual note; but the apple woman on the street corner must make a hundred and

* The word "nationalization" has been superseded as representative of the Socialist goal inasmuch as it implies the existence of the political state in a Socialist society. "Socialization" most aptly conveys the intent of the revolutionary movement.

five hundred per cent profit to exist. For the same reason, the middle class, the employer of few hands, is the worst, the bitterest, the most inveterate, the most relentless exploiter of the wage slave. You may now realize what a grave error that man will incur who will rest satisfied with external appearance. **Reform** is invariably a cat's paw for dupers; **Revolution** never.

Take now an illustration of the revolutionary principle that the material plane on which man stands determines his perception of morality. One man writes to "The People" office: "You speak about the immorality of capitalism, don't you know that it was immoral to demonetize silver?" Another writes: "How queer to hear you talk about immorality; don't you know it is a type of immorality to have a protective tariff?" He wants free trade. A third one writes: "Oh, sir, I admire the moral sentiment that inspires you, but how can you make fun of prohibition? Don't you know that if a man is drunk, he will beat his wife and kill his children?" And so forth. Each of these looks at morality from the standpoint of his individual or class interests: The man who owns a silver mine considers it the height of immorality to demonetize silver. The importer who can be benefited by free trade thinks it a heinous crime against good morals to set up a high tariff. The man whose wage slaves come on Monday somewhat boozy, so that he cannot squeeze, pilfer out of them as much wealth as he would like to, becomes a pietistic prohibitionist.

One of our great men, a really great man, a man whom I consider a glory to the United States—Artemus Ward—with that genuine, not bogus, keen Yankee eye of his saw, and with that master-pen of his excellently illustrated this scientific truth, with one of his yarns. He claimed, you know, that he traveled through the country with a collection of wax figures representing the great men and criminals of the time. On one occasion he was in Maine. At about that time a little boy, Wilkins, had killed his uncle. Of course, the occurrence created a good deal of a sensation, and Artemus Ward tells us that, having an

eye to the main chance, he got up a wax figure which he exhibited as Wilkins, the boy murderer. A few years later, happening again in the same Maine village, it occurred to him that the boy Wilkins had proved a great attraction in the place. He hunted around among his figures, found none small enough to represent a boy, and he took the wax figure that he used to represent Captain Kidd with, labelled that "Wilkins, the Boy Murderer," and opened his booth. The people flocked in, paid their fifteen cents admission, and Artemus started to explain his figures. When he reached the "Boy Murderer," and was expatiating upon the lad's wickedness, a man in the audience rose, and in a rasping, nasal voice, remarked: "How is that? Three years ago you showed us the boy, Wilkins, he was a boy then, and died since; how can he now be a big man?" Thereupon Artemus says: "I was angry at the rascal, and I should have informed against him, and have him locked up for **treason to the flag.**"

With the master hand of genius Artemus here exposed the material bases of capitalist "patriotism," and pointed to the connection between the two. The material plane, on which the fraudulent showman stood, determined his moral impulse on patriotism.

The higher the economic plane on which a class stands, and the sounder its understanding of material conditions, all the broader will its horizon be, and, consequently, all the purer and truer its morality. Hence it is that, to-day, the highest moral vision, and the truest withal, is found in the camp of the revolutionary proletariat. Hence, also, you will perceive the danger of the moral cry that goes not hand in hand with sound knowledge. The morality of Reform is the coruscation of the *Ignis Fatuus*; the morality of **Revolution** is lighted by the steady light of science.

Take another illustration, this time on the belligerent poise of Socialism, to distinguish reform from revolution.

The struggles that mark the movements of man have ever proceeded from the material interests, not of individuals, but of classes. The class interests on top, when rotten-ripe for overthrow, succumbed, when they did suc-

cumb, to nothing short of the class interests below. Individuals from the former class frequently took leading and invaluable part on the side of the latter, and individuals of the latter regularly played the role of traitors to civilization by siding with the former, as did, for instance, the son of the venerable Franklin when he sided with the British. Yet in both sets of instances, the combatants stood arrayed upon the platforms that represented opposite class interests. Revolutions triumphed, whenever they did triumph, by asserting themselves and marching straight upon their goal. On the other hand, the fate of Wat Tyler ever is the fate of reform. The rebels, in this instance, were weak enough to allow themselves to be wheedled into placing their movement into the hands of Richard II, who promised "relief"—and brought it by marching the men to the gallows.

You will perceive the danger run by movements that—instead of accepting no leadership except such as stands squarely upon their own demands—rest content with and entrust themselves to "promises of relief." **Revolution**, accordingly, stands on its own bottom, hence it cannot be overthrown; **Reform** leans upon others, hence its downfall is certain. Of all revolutionary epochs, the present draws sharpest the line between the conflicting class interests. Hence, the organizations of the revolution of our generation must be the most uncompromising of any that yet appeared on the stage of history. The program of this revolution consists not in any one detail. It demands the unconditional surrender of the capitalist system and its system of wage slavery; the total extinction of class rule is its object. Nothing short of that—whether as a first, a temporary, or any other sort of step can at this late date receive recognition in the camp of the modern revolution.

Upon these lines we organized in New York and Brooklyn, and prospered; upon these lines we have compelled the respect of the foe. And I say unto you, Go ye, and do likewise.

THE REFORMER—THE REVOLUTIONIST

And now to come to, in a sense, the most important, surely the most delicate, of any of the various subdivisions of this address. We know that movements make men, but men make movements. Movements cannot exist unless they are carried on by men; in the last analysis it is the human hand and the human brain that serve as the instruments of revolutions. How shall the revolutionist be known? Which are the marks of the reformer? In New York a reformer cannot come within smelling distance of us but we can tell him. We know him; we have experienced him; we know what mischief he can do; and he cannot get within our ranks if we can help it. He must organize an opposition organization, and thus fulfil the only good mission he has in the scheme of nature—pull out from among us whatever reformers may be hiding there.

But you may not yet be familiar with the cut of the reformer's jib. You may not know the external marks of the revolutionist. Let me mention them.

The modern revolutionist, i.e., the Socialist, must, in the first place, by reason of that sketch I presented to you, upon the development of the State, necessarily work in organization, with all that that implies. In this you have the first characteristic that distinguishes the revolutionist from the reformer; the reformer spurns organization; his symbol is "Five Sore Fingers on a Hand"—far apart from one another.

The modern revolutionist knows full well that man is not superior to principle, that principle is superior to man, but he does not fly off the handle with the maxim, and thus turn the maxim into absurdity. He firmly couples the maxim with this other that no principle is superior to the movement or organization that puts it and upholds it in the field. The engineer knows that steam is a powerful thing, but he also knows that unless the steam is in the boiler, and unless there is a knowing hand at the throttle, the steam will either evaporate or the boiler will burst. Hence, you will never hear an engineer say: "Steam is the

thing," and then kick the locomotive off the track. Similarly, the revolutionist recognizes that the organization, that is propelled by correct principles, is as the boiler that must hold the steam, or the steam will amount to nothing. He knows that in the revolution demanded by our age, Organization must be the incarnation of Principle. Just the reverse of the reformer, who will ever be seen mocking at science, the revolutionist will not make a distinction between the Organization and the Principle. He will say: "The Principle and the Organization are one."

A Western judge, on one occasion, had to do with a quibbling lawyer, who was defending a burglar—you know what a burglar is—and rendered a decision that was supremely wise. The prisoner was charged with having stuck his hand and arm through a window, and stolen something, whatever it was. The judge sentenced the man to the penitentiary. Said the lawyer: "I demur; the whole of the man did not break through the window; it was only his arm." "Well," said the judge, "I will sentence the arm; let him do with the body what he likes." As the man and his arm were certainly one, and as the man would not wrench his arm out of its socket and separate it from the body, he quietly went to the penitentiary, and I hope is there yet to serve as a permanent warning against "Reform Science."

Again, the modern revolutionist knows that in order to accomplish results or promote principle, there must be unity of action. He knows that, if we do not go in a body and hang together, we are bound to hang separate. Hence, you will ever see the revolutionist submit to the will of the majority; you will always see him readiest to obey; he recognizes that obedience is the badge of civilized man. The savage does not know the word. The word "obedience" does not exist in the vocabulary of any language until its people got beyond the stage of savagery. Hence, also, you will never find the revolutionist putting himself above the organization. The opposite conduct is an unmistakable earmark of reformers.

The revolutionist recognizes that the present machinery

and methods of production render impossible—and well it is they do—the individual freedom of man such as our savage ancestors knew the thing; that, to-day, the highest individual freedom must go hand in hand with collective freedom; and none such is possible without a central directing authority. Standing upon this vigor-imparting high plane of civilization, the revolutionist is virile and self-reliant, in striking contrast with the mentally sickly, and, therefore, suspicious reformer. Hence the cry of “Bossism!” is as absent from the revolutionist’s lips as it is a feature on those of the reformer.

Another leading mark of the revolutionist, which is paralleled with the opposite mark on the reformer, is the consistency, hence morality, of the former, and the inconsistency, hence immorality, of the latter. As the revolutionist proceeds upon facts he is truthful and his course is steady; on the other hand, the reformer will ever be found prevaricating and in perpetual contradiction of himself. The reformer, for instance, is ever vamping against “tyranny,” and yet watch him; give him rope enough and you will always see him straining to be the top man in the shebang, the man on horseback, the autocrat, whose whim shall be law. The reformer is ever prating about “morality,” but just give him a chance, and you will catch him every time committing the most immoral acts, as, for instance, sitting in judgment on cases, in which he himself is a *particeps criminis*, or countenancing and profiting by such acts. The reformer’s mouth is ever full with the words “individual freedom,” yet in the whole catalogue of defiers of individual freedom, the reformer vies with the frontmost.

Finally, you will find the reformer ever flying off at a tangent, while the revolutionist sticks to the point. The scatter-brained reformer is ruled by a centrifugal, the revolutionist by a centripetal force. Somebody has aptly said that in social movements an evil principle is like a scorpion; it carries the poison that will kill it. So with the reformers; they carry the poison of disintegration that breaks them up into twos and ones, and thus deprives

them in the end of all power for mischief; while the power of the revolutionist to accomplish results grows with the gathering strength that its posture insures to him.

The lines upon which we organize in New York and Brooklyn, are, accordingly, directly opposed to those of reformers. We recognize the need of organization with all that that implies—of organization, whose scientific basis and uncompromising posture inspire respect in the foe, and confidence in those who belong with us. This is the *sine qua non* for success.

Right here allow me to digress for a moment. Keep in mind where I break off that we may hitch on again all the easier.

Did you ever stop to consider why it is that in this country where opportunities are so infinitely superior, the working class movement is so far behind, whereas in Europe, despite the disadvantages there, it is so far ahead of us? Let me tell you.*

In the first place, the tablets of the minds of our working class are scribbled all over by every charlatan who has let himself loose. In Europe, somehow or other, the men who were able to speak respected and respect themselves a good deal more than most of our public speakers do here. They studied first; they first drank deep at the fountain of science; and, not until they felt their feet firmly planted on the rock-bed of fact and reason, did they go before the masses. So it happens that the tablets of the minds of the European, especially the Continental working classes, have lines traced upon them by the master hands of the ages. Hence every succeeding new movement brought forward by the tides of time, found its work paved for and easier. But here, one charlatan after another, who could speak glibly, and who could get money from this, that or the other political party, would go

* *The situation has changed in Europe since De Leon delivered this address. Today, probably only the Russian movement merits the high compliment De Leon bestows. The others have succumbed to the glib-tongued reformers of the Ramsey MacDonald type.*

among the people and upon the tablets of the minds of the working classes he scribbled his crude text. So it happens that to-day, when the apostle of Socialism goes before our people, he cannot do what his compeers in Europe do, take a pencil and draw upon the minds of his hearers the letters of science; no, he must first clutch a sponge, a stout one, and wipe clean the pot-hooks that the charlatans have left there. Not until he has done that can he begin to preach and teach successfully.

FAKE MOVEMENTS

Then, again, with this evil of miseducation, the working class of this country suffers from another. The charlatans, one after the other, set up movements that proceeded upon lines of ignorance; movements that were denials of scientific facts; movements that bred hopes in the hearts of the people; yet movements that had to collapse. A movement must be perfectly sound, and scientifically based or it cannot stand. A falsely based movement is like a lie, and a lie cannot survive. All these false movements came to grief, and what was the result?—disappointment, stagnation, diffidence, hopelessness in the masses.

The Knights of Labor, meant by Uriah Stephens, as he himself admitted, to be reared upon the scientific principles of Socialism—principles found to-day in no central or national organization of labor outside of the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance—sank into the mire. Uriah Stephens was swept aside; ignoramuses took hold of the organization; a million and a half men went into it, hoping for salvation; but, instead of salvation, there came from the veils of the K. of L. Local, District and General Assemblies the developed ignoramuses, that is to say, the Labor Fakirs, riding the workingman and selling him out to the exploiter. Disappointed, the masses fell off.

Thereupon bubbled up another wondrous concern, another idiosyncrasy—the American Federation of Labor, appropriately called by its numerous English organizers the American Federation of Hell. Ignoramuses again took hold and the lead. They failed to seek below the

surface for the cause of the failure of the K. of L.; like genuine ignoramuses, they fluttered over the surface. They saw on the surface excessive concentration of power in the K. of L., and they swung to the other extreme—they built a tape-worm. I call it a tape-worm, because a tape-worm is no organism; it is an aggregation of links with no cohesive powers worth mentioning. The fate of the K. of L. overtook the A. F. of L. Like causes brought on like results, false foundations brought on ruin and failure. Strike upon strike proved disastrous in all concentrated industries; wages and the standard of living of the working class at large went down; the unemployed multiplied; and again the ignorant leaders naturally and inevitably developed into approved Labor Fakirs; the workers found themselves shot, clubbed, indicted, imprisoned by the identical Presidents, Governors, Mayors, Judges, etc.—Republican and Democratic—whom their misleaders had corruptly induced them to support. To-day there is no A. F. of L.—not even the tape-worm—any more. If you reckon it up, you will find that, if the 250,000 members which it claims paid dues regularly every quarter, it must have four times as large a fund as it reports. The fact is the dues are paid for the last quarter only; the fakirs see to this to the end that they may attend the annual rowdidow called the "A. F. of L. Convention"—and advertise themselves to the politicians. That's all there is left of it. It is a ship, never seaworthy, but now stranded and captured by a handful of pirates; a tape-worm pulled to pieces, contemned by the rank and file of the American proletariat. Its career only filled still fuller the workers' measure of disappointment, diffidence, helplessness.

The Henry George movement was another of these charlatan booms, that only helped still more to dispirit people in the end. The "Single Tax," with its half-antiquated, half-idiotic reasoning, took the field. Again great expectations were raised all over the country—for a while. Again a semi-economic lie proved a broken reed to lean on. Down came Humpty Dumpty, and all the king's horses and all the king's men could not now put Humpty Dumpty

together again. Thus the volume of popular disappointment and diffidence received a further contribution.

Most recently there came along the People's Party movement. Oh, how fine it talked! It was going to emancipate the workers. Did it not say so in its preamble, however reactionary its platform? If bluff and blarney could save a movement, the People's Party would have been imperishable. But it went up like a rocket, and is now fast coming down a stick. In New York State it set itself up against us when we already had 14,000 votes, and had an official standing. It was going to teach us "dreamers" a lesson in "practical American politics." Well, its vote never reached ours, and last November when we rose to 21,000 votes, it dropped to barely 5,000, lost its official standing as a party in the State, and as far as New York and Brooklyn are concerned, we simply mopped the floor with it.

These false movements, and many more kindred circumstances that I could mention, have confused the judgment of our people, weakened the spring of their hope, and abashed their courage. Hence the existing popular apathy in the midst of popular misery; hence despondency despite unequalled opportunities for redress; hence the backwardness of the movement here when compared with that of Europe.

So return now where I broke off. The Socialist Labor Party* cannot, in our country, fulfill its mission—here less than anywhere else—without it takes a stand, the scientific soundness of whose position renders growth certain, failure impossible, and without its disciplinary firmness earns for it the unqualified confidence of the now eagerly onlooking masses both in its integrity of purpose and its capacity to enforce order. It is only thus that we can hope to

* At the time of this speech, the Socialist Labor Party, to which De Leon belonged, was the only bona fide American revolutionary political party. Today, the Industrial Union Party, because of its closest fidelity to De Leonism, stands at the very forefront of the movement in this country. The Industrial Union Party and De Leonism are synonymous.

rekindle the now low-burning spark of manhood and womanhood in our American working class, and re-conjure up the Spirit of '76.

THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT

We know full well that the race or class that is not virile enough to strike an intelligent blow for itself, is not fit for emancipation. If emancipated by others, it will need constant propping, or will collapse like a dish-clout. While that is true, this other is true also: In all revolutionary movements, as in the storming of fortresses, the thing depends upon the head of the column—upon that minority that is so intense in its convictions, so soundly based on its principles, so determined in its action, that it carries the masses with it, storms the breastworks and captures the fort. Such a head of the column must be our Socialist organization to the whole column of the American proletariat.

Again our American history furnishes a striking illustration. When Pizarro landed on the Western slope of the Andes, he had with him about 115 men. Beyond the mountains was an empire—the best organized empire of the aborigines that had been found in America. It had its departments; it had its classes; it was managed as one body, numbering hundreds of thousands to the Spaniards' hundred. That body the small army of determined men were to capture. What did Pizarro do? Did he say, "Let us wait till we get some more"? Or did he say: "Now, boys, I need every one of you 115 men"? No, he said to them: "Brave men of Spain, yonder lies an empire that is a delight to live in; full of gold; full of wealth; full of heathens that we ought to convert. They are as the sands of the sea, compared with us, and they are entrenched behind their mountain fastnesses. It needs the staunchest among you to undertake the conquest. If any, through the hardships of travel, feel unequal to the hardships of the enterprise, I shall not consider him a coward; let him stand back to protect our ships. Let only those stay with me who are determined to fight, and who are de-

terminated to conquer." About twenty men stood aside, about ninety-five remained; with ninety-five determined men he scaled those mountains, and conquered that empire.—That empire of the Incas is to-day **Capitalism**, both in point of its own inherent weakness and the strength of its position. The army that is to conquer it is the army of the proletariat, the head of whose column must consist of the intrepid Socialist organization that has earned their love, their respect, their confidence.

What do we see to-day? At every recent election, the country puts me in mind of a jar of water—turn the jar and all the water comes out. One election, all the Democratic vote drops out and goes over to the Republicans; the next year all the Republican vote drops out and goes over to the Democrats. The workers are moving backward and forward; they are dissatisfied; they have lost confidence in the existing parties they know of, and they are seeking desperately for the party of their class. At such a season, it is the duty of us revolutionists to conduct ourselves in such manner as to cause our organization to be better and better known, its principles more and more clearly understood, its integrity and firmness more and more respected and trusted—then, when we shall have stood that ground well and grown steadily, the masses will in due time flock over to us. In the crash that is sure to come and is now just ahead of us, our steadfast Socialist organization will alone stand out intact above the ruins; there will then be a stampede to our party—but only upon revolutionary lines can it achieve this; upon lines of reform it can never be victorious.

As the chairman said that time would be allowed for questions, I shall close at this point, but not before—you will pardon the assumption—not before I call upon you, in the name of the 6,000 "wicked," revolutionary Socialists of New York and Brooklyn, to organize, here in Boston, upon the genuinely revolutionary plan. Your State is a large manufacturing State; there can be no reason why your vote should not grow, except that, somehow or other, you have not acted as revolutionists.

Every year that goes by in this way is a year wasted. Never forget that every incident that takes place within you, within our ranks is noted by a large number of workers on the outside. Tamper with discipline, allow this member to do as he likes, that member to slap the party constitution in the face, yonder member to fuse with reformers, this other to forget the nature of the class struggle and to act up to his forgetfulness—allow that, keep such “reformers” in your ranks and you have stabbed your movement at its vitals. With malice toward none, with charity to all, you must enforce discipline if you mean to reorganize to a purpose. We know that in struggles of this kind, personal feelings, unfortunately, play a part; you cannot prevent that; let the other side, the reformer, fill the role of malice that its weak intellect drives it to; do you fill the role of the square-jointed revolutionist—and if there must be amputation, do it nobly, but firmly. Remember the adage that the tender-handed surgeon makes stinging wounds, and lengthens the period of suffering and pain. The surgeon that has a firm hand to push the knife as deep as it ought to go, and pulls it out, and lets the pus flow out, that surgeon makes clean wounds, shortens pain, brings cure quickly about.

No organization will inspire the outside masses with respect that will not insist upon and enforce discipline within its own ranks. If you allow your own members to play monkeyshines with the party, the lookers-on, who belong in this camp, will justly believe that you will at some critical moment allow capitalism to play monkeyshines with you; they will not respect you, and their accession to your ranks will be delayed.

There is, indeed, no social or economic reason why the vote of Boston should not be one of the pillars of our movement. And yet that vote is weak and virtually stationary, while in New York and Brooklyn it has on the whole been leaping forward. If you realize the importance of the revolutionary construction of our army; if you comprehend the situation of the country—that there is a popular tidal wave coming; that, in order to bring

it our way and render it effective, we must be deserving thereof, whereas, if we are not, the wave will recede with disastrous results; if you properly appreciate the fact that every year that passes over our heads brings to our lives greater danger, throws a heavier load upon the shoulders of our wives, makes darker the prospects of our sons, exposes still more the honor of our daughters—if you understand that, then for their sakes, for our country's sake, for the sake of the proletarians of Boston, organize upon the New York and Brooklyn plan.

THE END

Getting Something Now

By DANIEL DE LEON

The "New Yorker Volkszeitung", an organ of the Socialist Party, in its issue of September 3rd editorially ventures "to propose" to its "party's executive committee to utilize Roosevelt's thunder—which anyhow is stolen from us—for the Socialist (Socialist Party) fall campaign". The same editorial says of the electors, "they are also little benefited, at present, by the Socialist goal."

Roosevelt may or may not have stolen Socialist Party "thunder". He, however, stole nothing from Socialism. That he stole or cared to steal Socialist party "thunder" is pretty good evidence of the fate that is in store for the Socialist party. And that the hand of fate is upon the S. P. is confirmed by the "Volkszeitung's" own declaration as to the "little benefit" that can be secured at present from the Socialist goal.

The theory that the success of Socialism is predicated upon the Movement gaining something Now, right away, is a theory that has no place in the program of revolutionary Socialism, especially so in America.

The fundamental principle of Socialism is that freedom for the workers is not possible while the system of wage slavery lasts. Hence Socialism has for its mission the overthrow of the capitalist system of private ownership

of the machinery of production, and the establishment of the collective ownership in place thereof.

The theory that Socialism can with safety depart from the hard and fast line of its ultimate and follow the lure of something Now batters itself against the hard fact that something Now is not obtainable to it, and the logical consequence would be the degeneration of the Movement into something Now, a reform movement.

That something Now is not obtainable now, American history bears eloquent testimony. The fate of the movements that followed that lure into the desert of opportunism is to be read upon their gravestones as a warning to others.

If the aim of Socialism were to be made the getting of something Now, and Socialism later, Socialism would have to be sacrificed to the immediate progress. Hence for a Socialist to preach something Now, means that he discredits Socialism and only hopes to prepare the workers as voting cattle for capitalism, when capitalist parties, by "stealing", by taking up the something Now demands, give promise of their immediate realization.

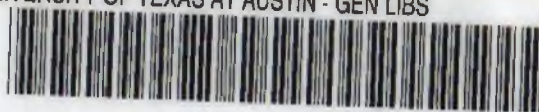
The Socialist party that in America follows the lure of getting Something Now will wind up by getting Nothing Now. Nor will it later, because it will have lost the golden opportunity of preparing the workers and the way for benefits of the Socialist goal.

The only Something worth striving for Now by Socialists, because it is the only one obtainable Now, is of the laying of as solid a foundation as possible on which to move forward to the conquest of capitalism. Then, too, the more attention that Socialists pay to the ultimate, the more will the capitalist class endeavor to stem the tide, and check its progress, by offering "something Now" schemes galore; so that granting that "Something Now" is desirable, the way to get it is by not bothering about it but by keeping steadily for the goal.

The "Volkszeitung" and other S. P. papers have thrown Socialism to the winds and become a rainbow chasing institution. If such doctrine is accepted and practiced by the Socialist party, it will ere long be interred with the other rainbow chasers, upon whose headstones is to be read the inscription, "I tried to Get Something Now and got here."



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